ARCHITECTURE

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American Architecture To-day

THE SECOND OF A SHORT SERIES ANALYZING AND CRITICISING OUR MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT PHASES

By Lewis Mumford

THE architect would like freedom. He would like a site that is adapted to its purpose; he would like a purpose that is not indifferent to beauty; he would like large means and a certain margin to play around in. This sort of freedom is not often to be found in commercial and industrial building; but there is one province of American architecture where it still exists: the dwelling-house. What has the modern architect done with this opportunity? What new expression has he achieved?

The conditions here are all that the architect could ask. He has a site of five acres—or five hundred—in which to plant his house; he can utilize the landscape gardener to give his house a setting; he need not be troubled by the extravagances or disfigurements of neighboring houses; materials and fixtures are his to command. This seems like an ideal opportunity; yet the result is that to-day we are in precisely the same condition and state of mind that our best architects were in forty years ago. With every favoring circumstance, our designs for houses still lag behind every other type: they are mainly efforts to achieve the picturesque.

In our domestic architecture, the plans have of course improved a little: the utilities and services are more elaborate. So much one may grant, but the designs of our best country-house architects—men like Mr. Gilchrist or Mr. Meigs or Mr. Gregory—show little to-day that was not already in the designs of Mr. Halsey Wood or Mr. H. H. Richardson or young Mr. Stanford White more than a generation back. Such gain as one may record is a certain sureness in using the materials: the architect works *in* the stone or the wood and uses it appropriately. If we have fewer Lorraine Chateaux, however, we have more Norman manor-houses; if we do not build Italian palaces quite so often we make up for our discretion by taking over the mode of the Cotswolds; and I am not sure that the net gain is very large. If one has to choose between various archaic modes one may legitimately take the more direct and simple; but one must remember that this is the end, and not the beginning, of an appropriate architecture. Such advances are not fundamental; they do not imply further growth and development.

The picturesque is the *ignis fatus* of architecture; and it is unfortunate that our country and suburban architecture should still be so hot in quest of it. When a sophisticated age attempts to reproduce the forms of a simple one, when a period of hasty acquisitions and attainments attempts to imitate the mosses, the genial weather-beaten tones, or the sag of a roof line which time alone has produced, the result is bound to be ephemeral for all its show of dignity and durability. These new country-houses are not bad of their kind; the point is that their kind is irrelevant. Every function that is performed in the house has been altered by modern knowledge and habits: babies are born to-day not without premeditation on the part of their parents; they are fed on a diet that would have seemed preposterous twenty years ago; they are treated to sunlight and fresh air in hitherto unheard-of quantities; and as they grow up they find themselves in a world so complicated that every aspect of life must be simplified to the last degree. In short, the requirements for a good dwelling-house have altered as the life it embraces has altered—in as

A cottage in East Orange, N. J., designed a generation ago by Halsey Wood

Apartments and service-station, Mariemont, Ohio, designed by Edmund B. Gilchrist

great a degree as the requirements for a fire-proof loft-building. But one could hardly guess from the aspect of our fine country-houses that these requirements had changed: on the contrary, there is an almost complete lack of relation between feeling, function, and design.

How often does one see a new colonial house in some perfect New England village marred by the addition of a sleeping-porch! How often does one feel, on going into a French hunting-lodge, that either the house should look different or the people should be

A housing group at Mariemont, Ohio, in which simple and inexpensive materials have been used with great directness by Edmund B. Gilchrist

different people and the place a different place! In how many Cotswold cottages could one arrange a screened but open second-story porch for sun-bathing without forfeiting the quaintness the architect has sought in every touch! I have no abstract bias against natural materials, against handicraft, against a simplification of mechanical utilities: quite the contrary, I enjoy these things and envy those who possess a fire-screen by Mr. Samuel Yellin or a vase by Mr. Varnum Poore. That a country-house should be part of its landscape, that the architect can gain much through

The Arthur E. Newbold, Jr., house, Laverock, Pa., by Mellor, Meigs & Howe

using local building materials, that a more organic rather than a mechanical feeling should pervade country architecture—all these things seem to me essentially true and fitting. But one must accomplish these ends to-day not as William Morris accomplished them in the Red House but as Morris would have used them had he been born in our own generation and had profited by our many advances. The most adequate examples of regional architecture in America that I know of are also the freshest and most original: the wooden cottages that Richardson built in the eighties, the concrete houses of Mr. Irving Gill in California, or the varied expressions of locality embodied in Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright's country-houses. Mr. Wright is usually looked upon as our most distinguished modernist, because both in design and in methods of construction he has worked out new forms, instead of following the line of least resistance. His work must also be recognized—by us if not by his European admirers—as deeply regional in feeling: they are "home" and not merely an abstract expression of the machine age. Mr. Wright's prairie houses in brick and tile and concrete, his northern house at Taliesin mainly in stone, his Tahoe wooden cabins designed for a primeval mountain environment, and the Iness House, of textile block slab, conceived in terms of mountain and desert, have done as much to advance an appropriate regional architecture as our revivals have done to delay it. A hundred years from now this sort of architecture will seem mellow and traditional; while that part of our architecture which sought mellowness and warmth at the expense of health, convenience, and fresh design will serve as a reminder of the pretentiousness and trickery of early twentieth-century architecture, precisely as the jig-saw architecture of the seventies reminds us to-day of the barbarism of the Gilded Age.

II

If picturesque architecture is unsound even when it stands by itself, in the midst of trees and gardens,

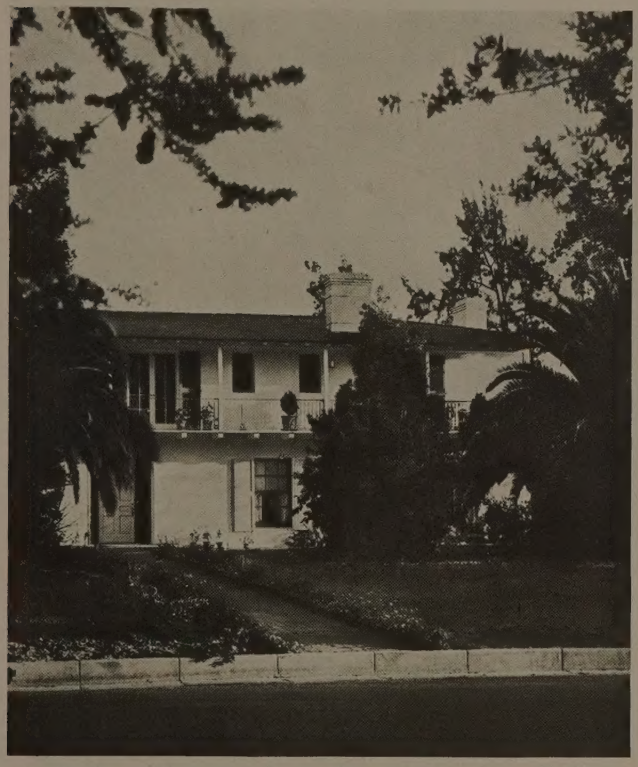
Part of the government housing development at Bridgeport, Conn.

Part of the work at Sunnyside Gardens, Long Island City, erected by the City Housing Corporation of New York

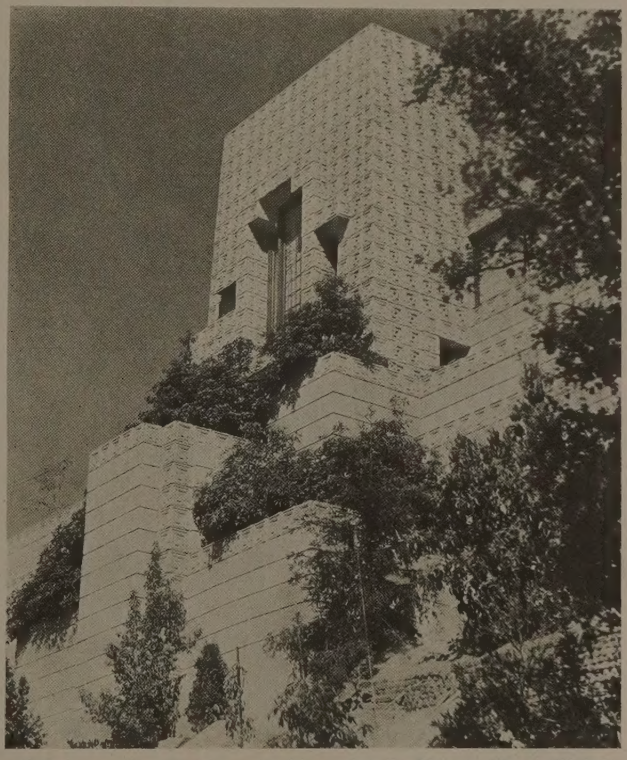
which conceal and shelter its ineptitudes, its total inadequacy for modern design appears emphatically in any suburban street. I do not propose to dwell on the absurdities of Spanish, French, English, Colonial, Federal, Italian houses, all a little simplified and adapted to middle-class purposes and tastes, that greet us in Highland Park and Guilford and Squirrel Hill and Floral Heights. It is enough to say that if we had an architecture in any of our great regions, we should not have so many nondescript architectures.

What is just as bad as the concrete embodiment of this Wonderland of styles is the debauching effect such scenery has upon the mind and the æsthetic sense of the community. For most educated people to-day, certainly for most women, tutored by women's magazines and courses in historic appreciation, architecture *is* the picturesque and the personal; and strong, vigorous, rational designs, akin to those which dignify every great vernacular expression, are looked upon as ugly and mean. The tawdry emphasis of the picturesque spreads over all our commonplace residential building; there is scarcely a place that is free from it. It results in bad upper-story plans with many uncomfortable gabled rooms and dormer windows—every bumped head a tribute to the deity of the picturesque. It results in the conversion of decent concrete and stucco and plaster into unmentnioable smears and spatters and muds—textures which grit against the skin or the clothes, catch dirt, and encourage the manufacture of appropriately Italian furniture. It results, in the cheaper branches of building, in substitutes that are even more futile than the original natural material, such as the fireproof imitation of half-timber on the upper stories of apartment-houses—an addition which again and again spoils an otherwise direct and rational design.

In short, the application of the picturesque mars and belittles the real achievements that have been made in American domestic architecture during the last ten years. These achievements have occurred in two capital departments. The first department is the manufactured parts of the modern house, the bathroom and kitchen fixtures, kitchen ranges, bathtubs, cabinets, ice-boxes. The kitchen and the bathroom, as I have repeatedly said elsewhere, are the two parts of the modern American house that are entirely fresh and adequate in design—color, fitness for function, a nice disposition of parts, in short, all the elementary ingredients of form are embodied with great surety and finish; and one will look long for these characteristics in any other part of the modern house. There is still room for much improvement here: our locksmiths, our doormakers, our manufacturers of lighting fixtures and furniture have a considerable distance to go before they will catch up with the procession; but even here there are signs of a slow, if not so steady, advance, and the chief danger that threatens us is a relapse in those details where we are now triumphant —a relapse into "period plumbing," or into kitchen cabinets with a Tudor finish. Here we face the same



Reginald D. Johnson's own home at Pasadena, Calif.



The Inness house, of textile block slab, by Frank Lloyd Wright

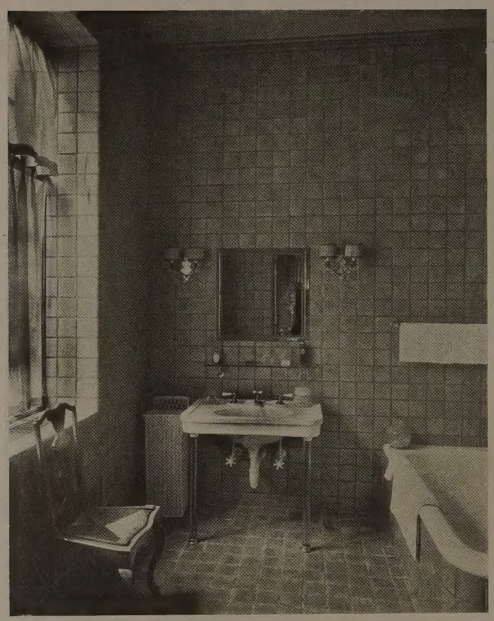
The living-room of Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright's own home in Wisconsin

Taliesin and its setting—one of the four courts, by Frank Lloyd Wright

paradox that confronted us in commercial buildings: our attempts at art result in bastard art, but our attempts to create thoroughly competent and finished utilities result in something that more and more approaches, in machine technic, what handicraft achieved in its own province.

The other direction in which advance has taken place is in site-planning. Our numerous achievements in war housing, both on paper and in construction, showed what could be done with simple housing units when they were intelligently related to a community plan, and when the house itself, instead of standing alone, gained further interest by its juxtaposition to other houses, to gardens and trees, and to remoter houses as background. Messrs. Stein and Wright and Ackerman have shown in Sunnyside Gardens how, with standardized plans and a few simple types of building, a whole may be built up which is more sound and æsthetically satisfying than any amount of stylistic individuality and fake picturesqueness. No one of their houses has any remarkable individuality; the "style" is just the simplest possible treatment of common brick, with windows of standard size; but every section of a block, grouped around a common garden, has a distinct individuality and the total result is something that has genuine style.

Obviously, this is the same order of vernacular design that produced the fine gardens and squares of Bloomsbury and Belgravia, which are equally severe and rational in their elements; and the recent achievement of this kind of design in America is one of the few promises I can find in American domestic architecture. Here is an answer to those who believe that uniformity is another name for monotony, that standardization is a synonym for baseness, and that mechanical methods, scaled down to the very lowest costs, are altogether inimical to good architecture. The truth of the matter seems to be this: When these operations proceed automatically they produce very hideous designs indeed, as every new city extension in Philadelphia, Detroit, Brooklyn, or Boston unfortunately shows. On the other hand, when they are used with intelligence and imagination, when the architect as community-planner can produce a coherent whole, they may exhibit in the individuality of the whole what is lost through standardization of the part. The Committee on Community Planning of the A. I. A. has dwelt on this possibility in a series of comprehensive reports; and its findings now have the support of many concrete demonstrations. Hitherto we have sought to achieve by individual design—by "style," "period," "picturesqueness," "personality"—what can only be attained through collective effort. In modern architecture no individual can stand alone: in back of his effort stands



A modern bathroom; in this, having no precedent, we must create new forms

A modern kitchen in which practical considerations alone are allowed to govern, with a not unpleasing result

the work of a hundred crafts and manufactures, which will make or mar his own efforts; and in back of the crafts and manufactures stands the community itself—with its general level of taste, culture, and income. There is no escape from this condition. An architect of originality can further the collective advance; but unless there is continual improvement all along the line, improvement in manufacture, improvement in the methods of social finance for housing, improvement in community-planning, there is little prospect, certainly in domestic architecture, for a new and authentic architecture.

The Coonley House, Riverside, Ill.—One of the best known of Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie houses

The dining-room walls above the wainscot are covered in red satin damask

INTERIORS, HOUSE OF ROBERT K. STAFFORD, NEW YORK

Decorated under the direction of
HAROLD W. VASSAR, ARCHITECT

Photographs by Gottscho

The library has a panelled wainscot of oak. The furniture is of oak, with the exception of the black-and-red-lacquer desk chair. Upholstery and curtains are of turkey red glazed chintz, with pattern in greens, yellows, and black

The Georgian living-room has the walls done in a soft green and glazed. Hearth and facing of the fireplace are black-and-gold marble. The rug is henna with border in greens, golds, and coral. The upholstery covering of the Queen Anne chair beside the fireplace has a neutral ground and pattern in green and coral. The sofa is covered in jade green antique satin

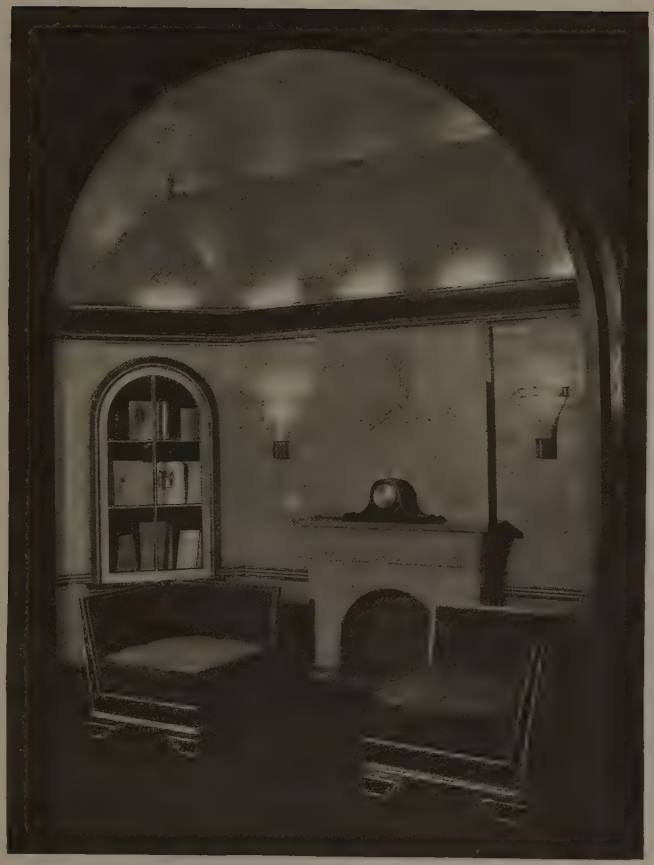
Mrs. Stafford's bedroom has walls in ivory, the rug salmon color, hangings in French blue hand-woven silk with embroidered tie-backs, while the draw curtains and window-seats are salmon taffeta. The bergère is covered in a silver-and-salmon damask, the chaise-longue in blue French velvet. The dressing-table is in ivory decorated

The living-room hangings are soft gold with metal tie-backs, the draw curtains of champagne taffeta. The secretary and old chair are Chippendale, while the drum table is eighteenth-century Sheraton

Decorated under the direction of

HAROLD W. VASSAR, ARCHITECT

The second-floor hall has a console table in walnut reproduced from a design of William Kent. The mirror is Queen Anne with gold frame. Side chairs are walnut covered in old tapestry. The walls of the hall are in ivory



Modernistic Showroom and Offices

DESIGNED BY LUCIAN BERNHARD

TO create a modern exhibition room in combination with a business office which houses people during the working hours is a difficult task to accomplish successfully. It was the task set before Lucian Bernhard for the Modern Library, Inc., at 20 East 57th Street, New York City.

According to the designer, a modern exhibition room, to be interesting, must be dramatic. To serve its raison d'etre it must not be diluted, but in full strength. In the case of a showroom, which serves only as a background for transients, no attention need be paid to the varying moods of its visitors. The object is to create a setting for the product to be sold, and, in every ingenious way possible, to attract the eye of the prospective customer to the merchandise.

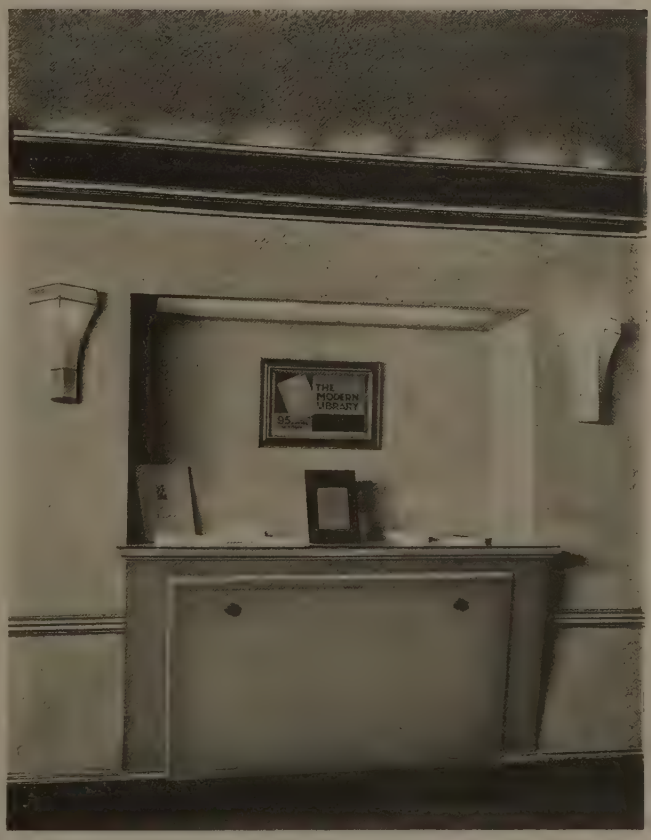
On the other hand, a modern interior which combines the exhibition room with working quarters for people during a part of each day cannot be too radical or too exciting. It must be comfortable and intimate. It must establish an entente cordiale between the owner and the client.

Bernhard feels that "as modern designers become more sure of themselves they will also become less afraid to acknowledge the heritage bequeathed them by the great masters of the past. . . . The human proportions do not change. Therefore, why deny the perfection and the æsthetic value derived from a genuine masterpiece or a faultless room creation of a past period based on the same proportions?

The half-baked modernism now so prevalent is, in most cases, the frantic output of copyists, turned loose from their stint and trying to give the public what they think the long-suffering public wants.

On the other hand the thoughtful modernist, from his knowledge of his craft, is already quietly creating imaginative interiors and individual pieces which contribute to the modern idea and which are livable and in good taste.

Photographs by Ralph Steiner



Photograph by Tebbs & Knell

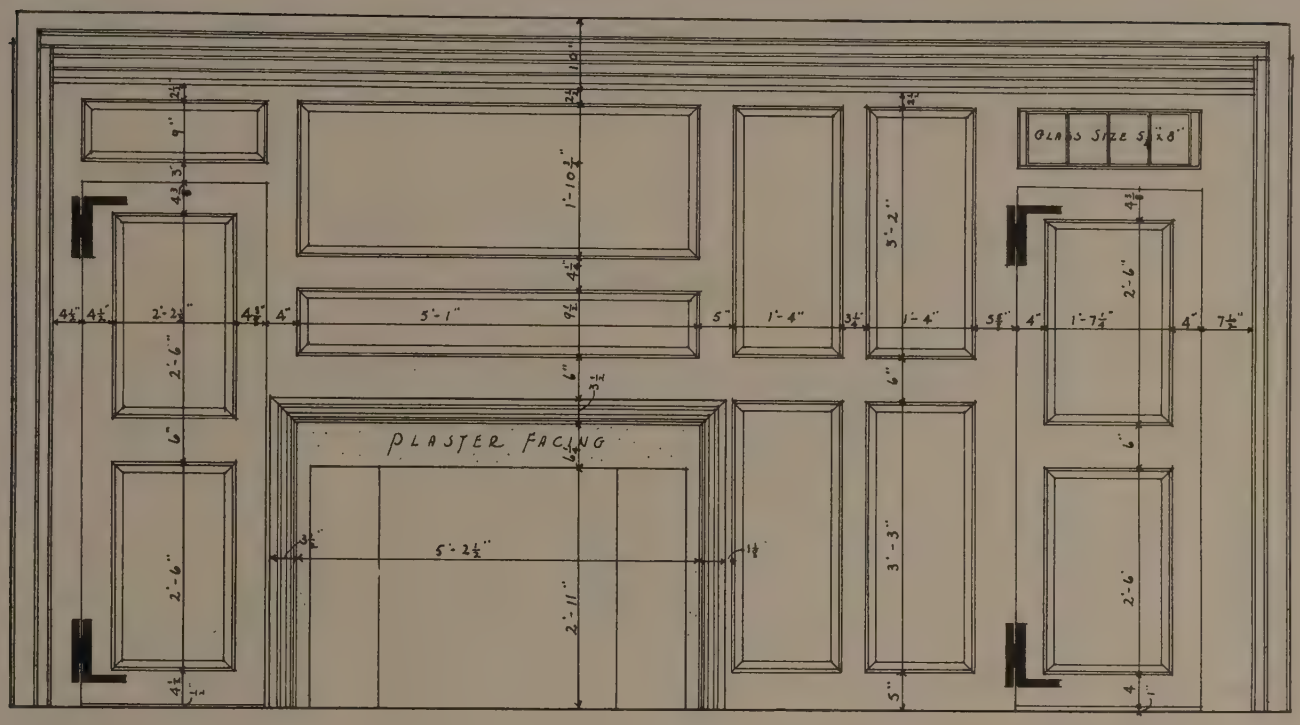
At top of page, lighting fixtures of parchment bound with gold. The reception room has a ceiling of turquoise blue, frieze of dark brown walls glazed a cream gray.

Recessed table and manuscript compartment opposite the fireplace. It is stippled and glazed a cream gray, graded to a lighter tone in the centre. Overhead, lighted panel.

Photographs by Tebbs & Knell

The corner of the street end of the reception room, divided from the entrance by velvet portières of honey-colored and brown silk velvet in alternating strips. The sofa is glazed brown with ivory moldings; its upholstery, like that of the chairs, of brown and sand-colored rep. The lamps are mustard-yellow with natural parchment shades. Window-bench upholstery and window drapes match portières

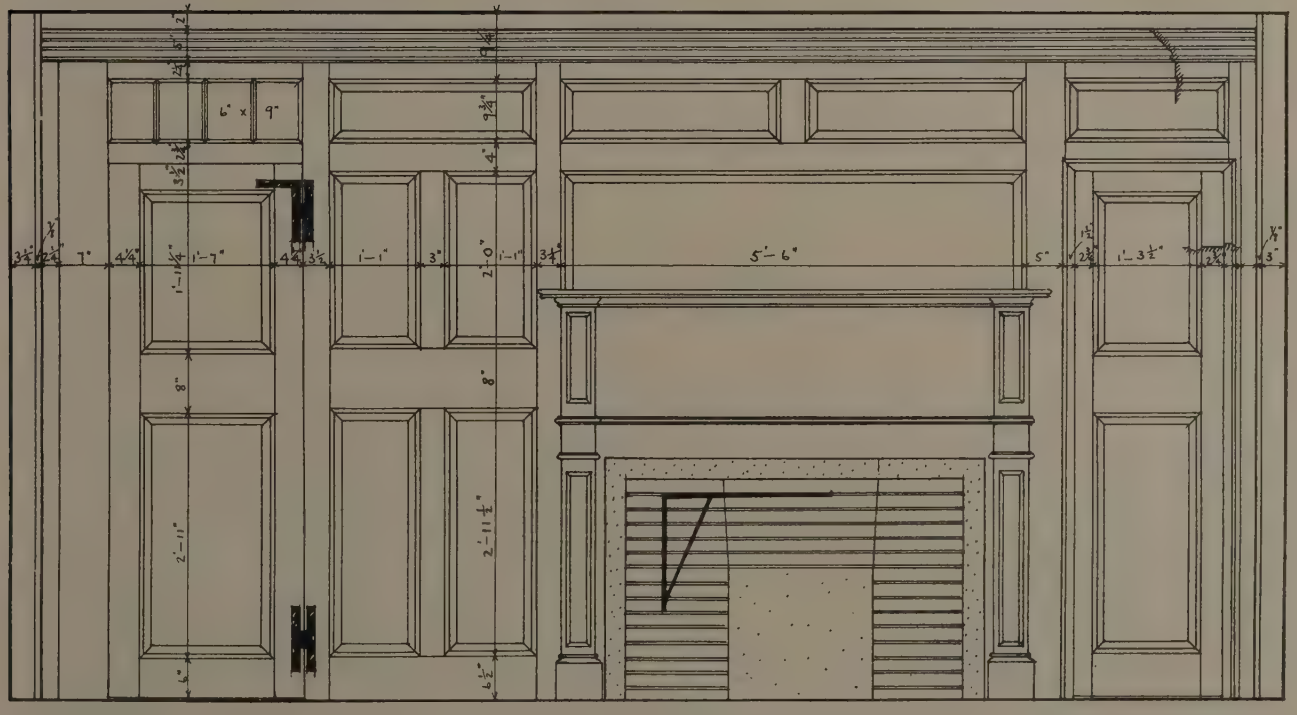
A corner of the private office. Walls and ceiling are in lemon yellow, carpet in ultramarine blue to match the round-top door, which is glazed and graded to a lighter tone in centre. The bench is upholstered in a linen with yellow, blue, lavender, and brown stripes.



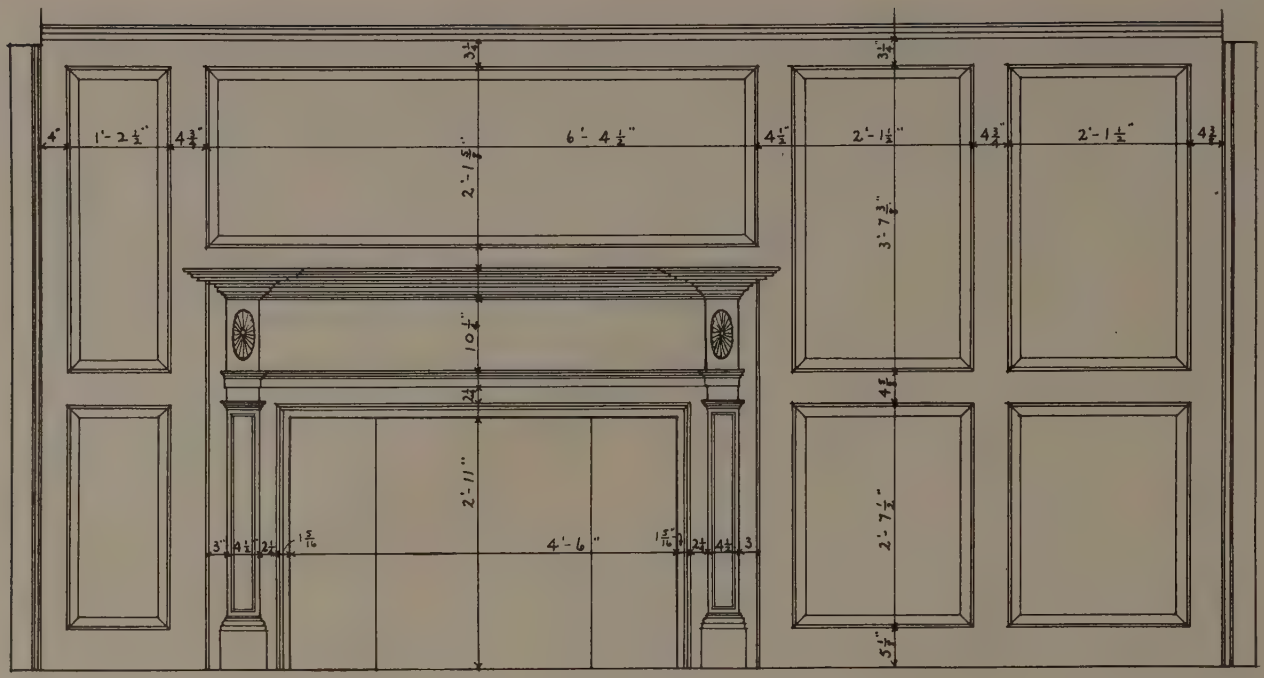
ELEVATION
Scale
0 3 6 9
1ft 2 3 4

NANTUCKET, MASS.
PANELLED ROOM, 9 MILK ST.

MEASURED AND DRAWN BY
THOMAS TILESTON WATERMAN



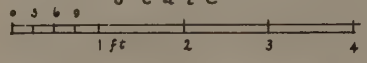
NANTUCKET, MASS.
EAST ROOM, 9 MILK ST.



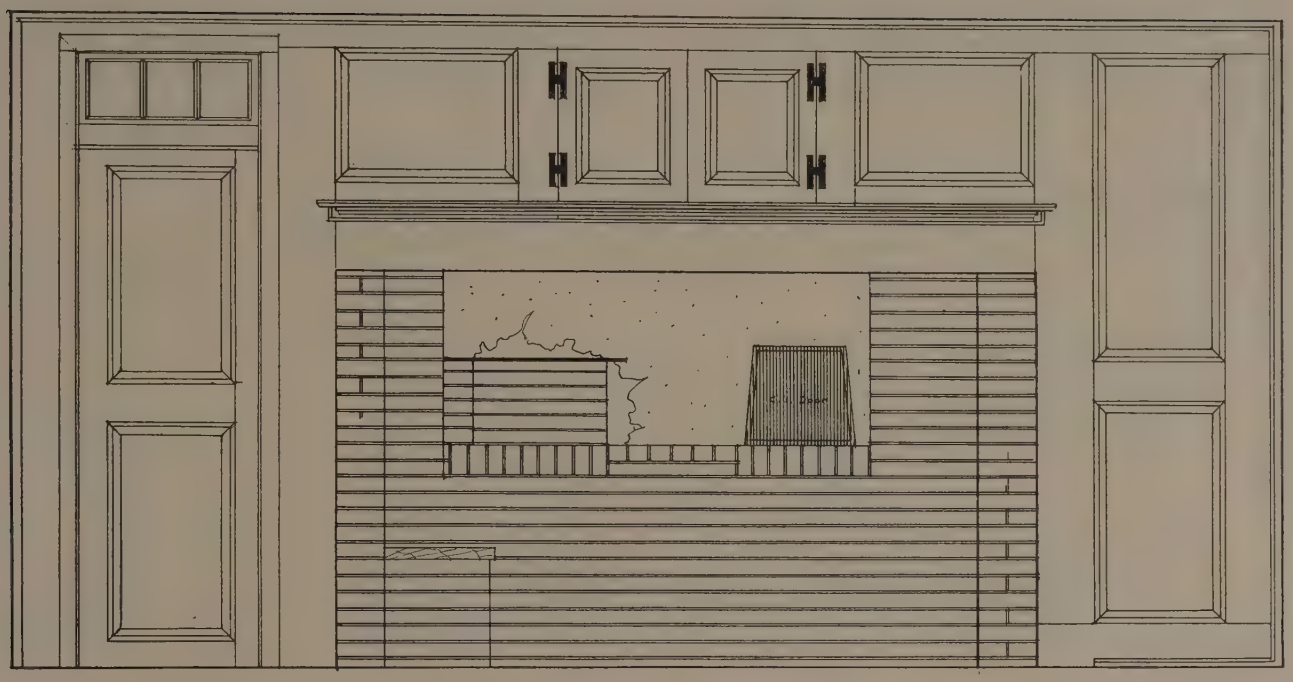
MEASURED AND DRAWN BY
CHARLES JAMES WALSH

~ ELEVATION ~

Scale



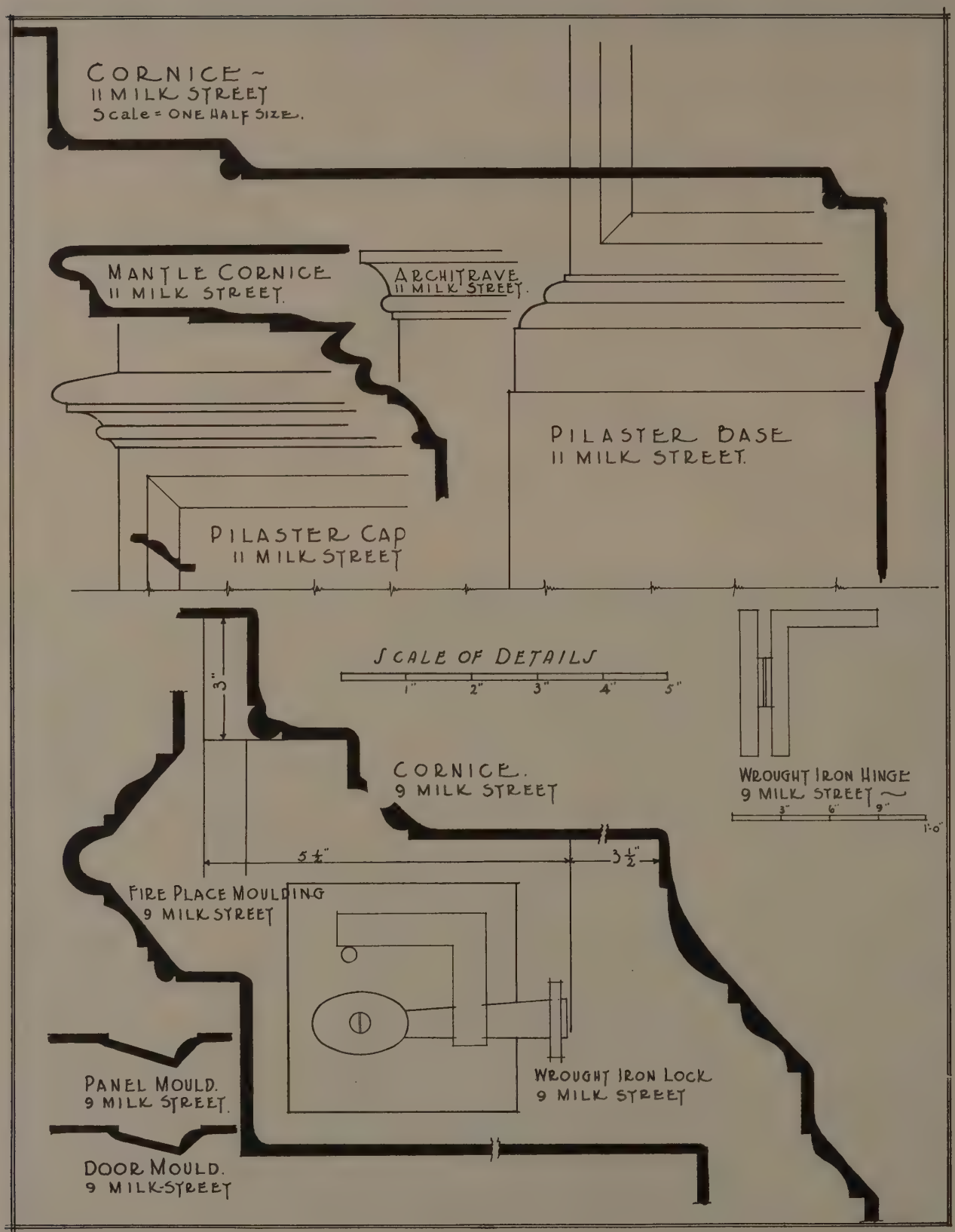
NANTUCKET, MASS.
PANELLED ROOM, 11 MILK ST.



12" 9" 6" 3" 0 1' 2' 3'

MEASURED AND DRAWN BY
THOMAS TILESTON WATERMAN

Dining-room, 11 Milk St., Nantucket, Mass.



NANTUCKET, MASS.
DETAILS OF PANELLING, 9 AND 11 MILK ST.

MEASURED AND DRAWN BY
CHARLES JAMES WALSH

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Unfortunately, you cannot have great architecture without money; great buildings cost a great deal of money, and that is why architects have so much greater opportunities in America than they have in England to-day.

RT. HON. VISCOUNT LEE OF FAREHAM, P. C.,
Hon. Fellow, R. I. B. A.

AE LOOKS US OVER

GEORGE W. RUSSELL, lately returned to his own Ireland, was a delightful visitor in America. He is a great optimist, a great enthusiast, as a poet should be. "The most striking things I have observed here," he said, "have been your remarkable architecture, particularly in New York City, and the kindness and hospitality of the American people. I was confident that I would find here the foundation of a new culture, and I believe that I have found it."

AE was particularly enthusiastic about the high buildings in New York City. "They are marvellous! I can visualize the New York of fifty years from now as a city of magnificent pagodas. And this trend toward towering, graceful structures is not confined to New York City. I found it in Houston, Texas, in Chicago, and in other cities which I visited." The mingling together of so many racial strains in America, with the corresponding freedom from traditions which have cramped the thought of other peoples, gives us, in AE's opinion, an opportunity for world consciousness that has been vouchsafed to no other people. As a result, our literature and our arts hold the promise, at least, of great things.

"With never a skyscraper, there was more congestion in Rome than there is even in New York to-day."

GEORGE HENRY PAYNE,
Commissioner of Taxes and Assessments, New York.

ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM

H. L. MENCKEN goes us one better on the subject of architectural criticism. In a recent review in *The American Mercury* of Dean Edgell's "The American Architecture of To-day," he says:

"Doctor Edgell complains that the American architect gets too little credit for his good work—that even when a new building is greatly admired, and worthy of that admiration, few persons know who designed it. I think the thing cuts both ways. That is to say, the surviving bad architects—and enough of them remain to make scotching them worth while—too easily escape the just consequences of their crimes. Long ago I suggested that laws be passed requiring that the name of the architect be inscribed, in large and plain letters, upon every new building, and that it be kept there for a year. I herewith renew this suggestion, and add the proposal that a blackboard be added, for the convenience of persons desiring to record their opinions of his work. I bar out, of course, anonymous criticisms: every verdict, however brief—say the single word 'superb,' or 'ass'—should be signed. But I am against giving architects any right to sue unfriendly critics for libel. They should be subjected to precisely the same free criticism that other artists must face. In their case, indeed, there should be even more freedom than usual, for no one can escape their work: it is forced upon all of us. We may avoid reading bad poetry or hearing bad music or looking at bad paintings, but a bad building must be endured, and not transiently but for long years.

"I go further. I advocate hanging architects whose work is intolerably bad. They exist in all American cities, despite the general improvement in their craft. Most of them specialize in the design of movie and gasoline cathedrals. Let each city select its worst once a year (say by the vote of all the practising architects of the place, or by that of the local members of the Association Opposed to the Prohibition Amendment, or that of the local subscribers to *The American Mercury*, or *The Atlantic Monthly*, or *The New Republic*, or *House and Garden*), and then let the nominee be seized by the police, given twenty or thirty strokes of the bastinado, and hanged in front of his masterpiece."

CONGRATULATIONS

WE extend belated but none the less fervent felicitations to The American Federation of Arts upon the appointment of Alexander Buell Trowbridge as Director of the organization. It would indeed be difficult to find any one in this country so well fitted to the task, so full of enthusiasm for the Federation's aims, and so fully endowed with the tact and personal charm that will make for the achievement of these aims. Mr. Trowbridge, it will be recalled, was Director and Dean of the College of Architecture, Cornell University, 1897 to 1902. In 1906 he formed a partnership with Frederick L. Ackerman, during which practice such notable work as the George D. Pratt house at Glen Cove and the Truman H. Newberry house at Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, was built. Since 1921 Mr. Trowbridge has been consulting architect to the Federal Reserve Board and has served in an advisory capacity for many other important works. He has held the office of president of the Architectural League of New York and has been a member of the City Planning and Survey Committee of New York, as well as the American Institute of Architects, Society of Beaux-Arts Architects, and the National Sculpture Society.

Noble buildings mean noble men, mediocre buildings mean mediocre people. WALTER TAPPER, A. R. A.,
President, Royal Institute of British Architects.

Atlantic City has in course of erection a new Convention Hall with a seating capacity of over 40,000. Lockwood, Greene & Co., Inc., Engineers and Architects

The old Brice House, 1740, a priceless architectural monument of Annapolis, is one of several old buildings now taken over by St. John's College, to be preserved permanently

Architectural News

London is apparently taking to the setback, as is shown by this drawing of the Underground Building, made by Muirhead Bone

St. Louis is to have a new hotel of twenty-three stories, designed by Preston J. Bradshaw, Architect

Hotel New Yorker, a thirty-nine-story building designed for Eighth Avenue at 34th Street. Sugarman & Berger, Architects

Among the new buildings recently added to Harvard University is Strauss Hall, designed by Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott, Architects

in Photographs

A proposed new educational centre, Adelphi College, at Garden City, Long Island, with sixty-nine acres of campus and a capacity of 3,000 students. McKim, Mead & White, Architects

Men's dormitory now under construction for Oregon State Agricultural College, Corvallis, Ore. Bennes & Herzog, Architects

Christadora House, a settlement on the east side of New York, for young women. Henry C. Pelton, Architect

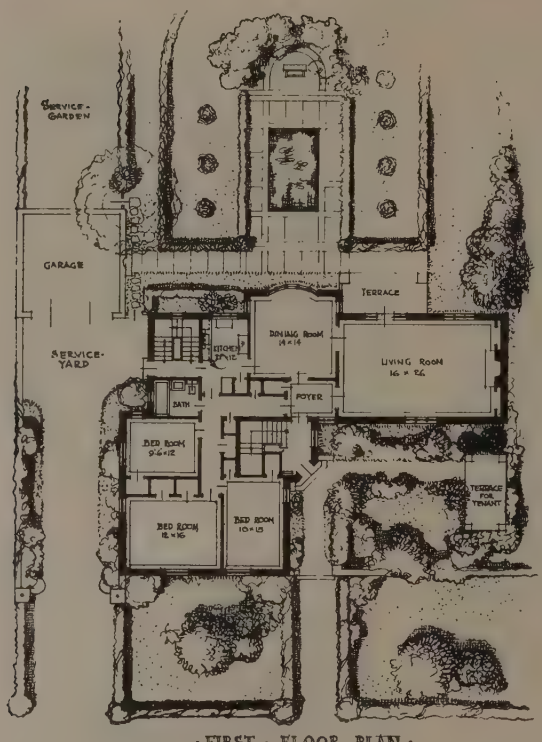
Detroit's new multistory Book Tower Garage, now under construction. Louis Kamper, Inc., Architects

The winning design for the Museum of the City of New York, 103d Street and Fifth Avenue. Joseph H. Freedlander, Architect

The new Clinic Building of the Mayo Brothers in Rochester, Minn., with its carillon tower. Ellerbe & Co., Architects

Entrance Front

Garden Front



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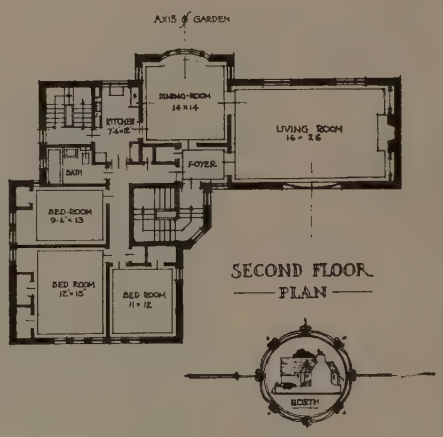


First-prize design for duplex two-family house, by Alfred Kastner, New York, in the competition held by the Portland Cement Association and sponsored by the T-Square Club of Philadelphia. The judges were Robert R. McGoodwin, Wilson Eyre, and H. Louis Duhring. Second prize went to John Donald Tuttle, New York; Third prize to Frank C. Burke, Watertown, Mass.

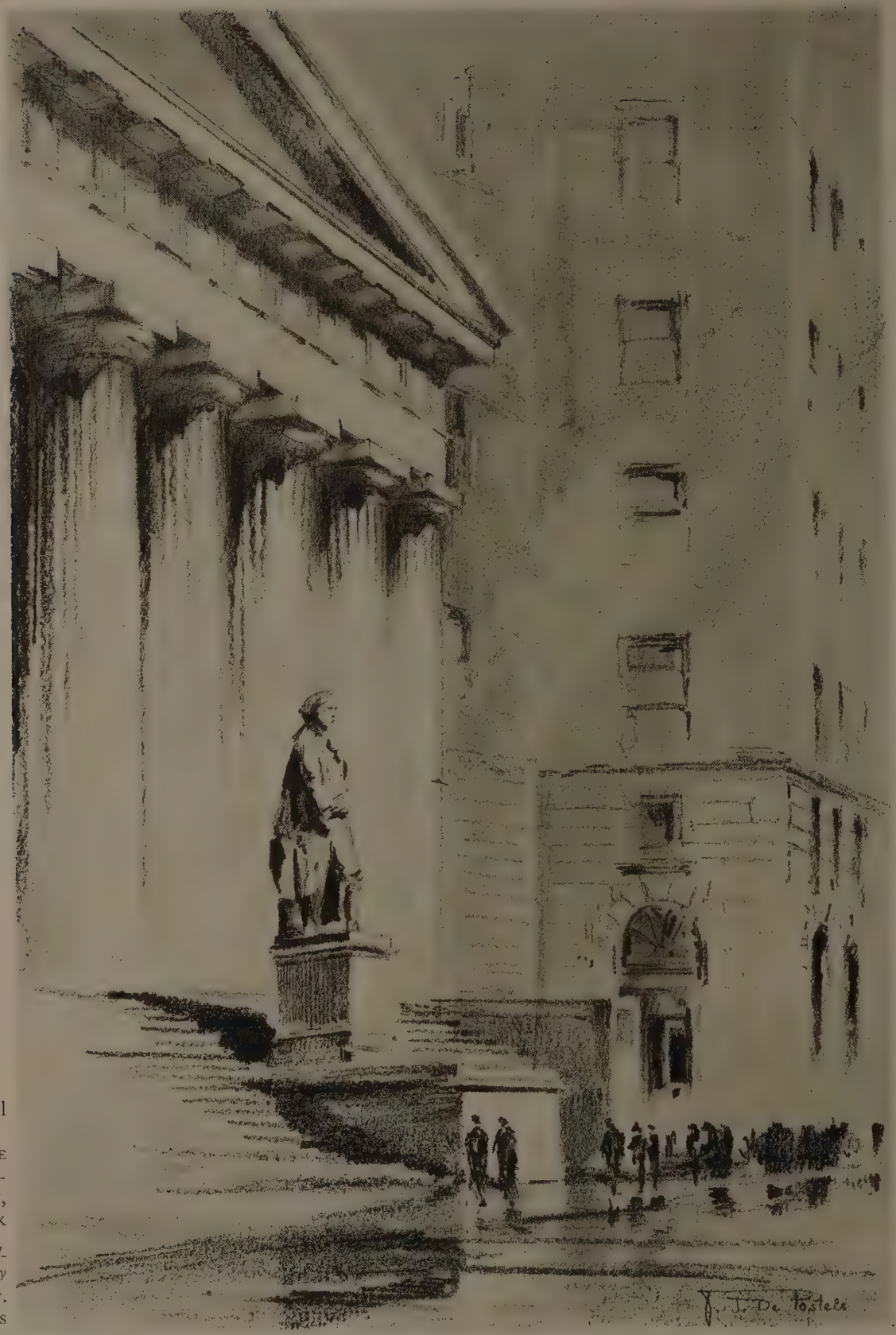
Prize-Winners in Small-House Competitions

Below, the first-prize design for a $7,000 house of brick and tile, by John M. Vink, in the Cleveland Clay League competition. Judges: George W. Beer, Edwin J. Truthan, and Charles S. Schneider. Second prize went to Horace G. Horne and Fred J. Abendroth; third to Stephen E. Nichols

Entrance
Detail

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

From three-tone rendering by
T. T. DE POSTELS



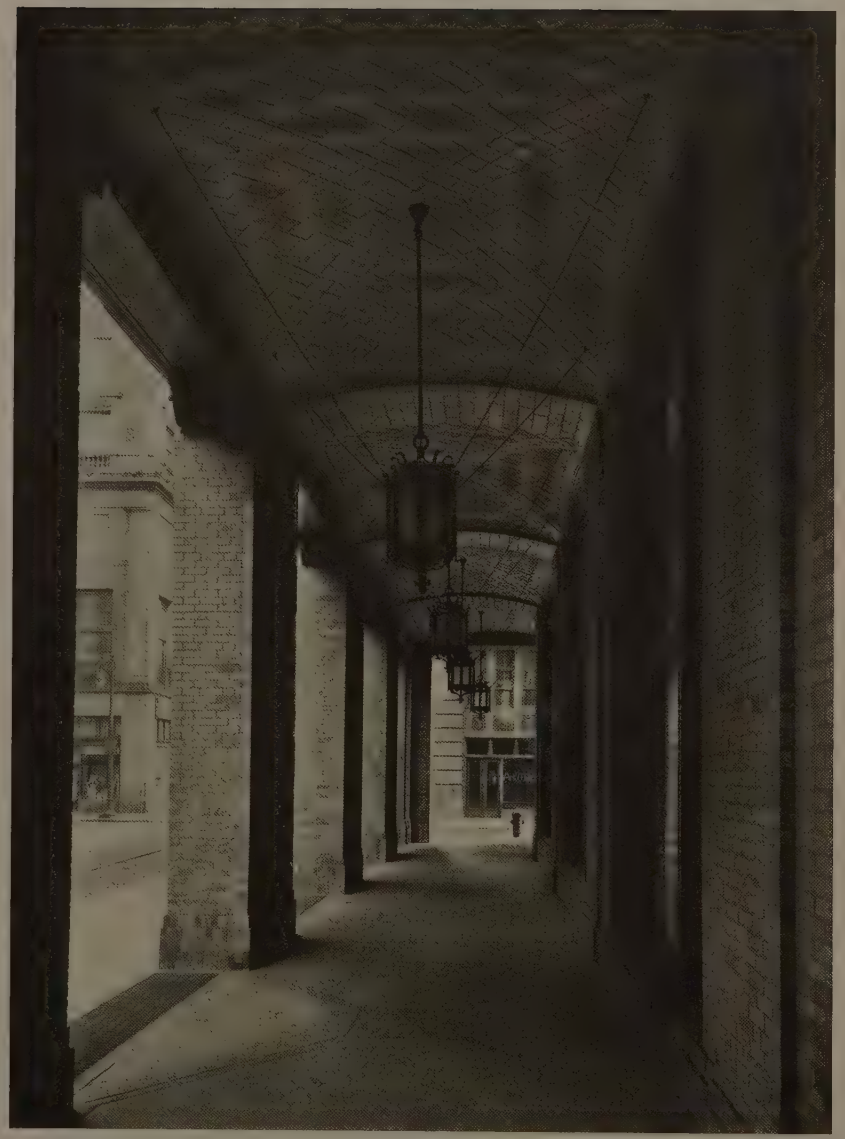
Detail

THE SUB-TREASURY, NEW YORK

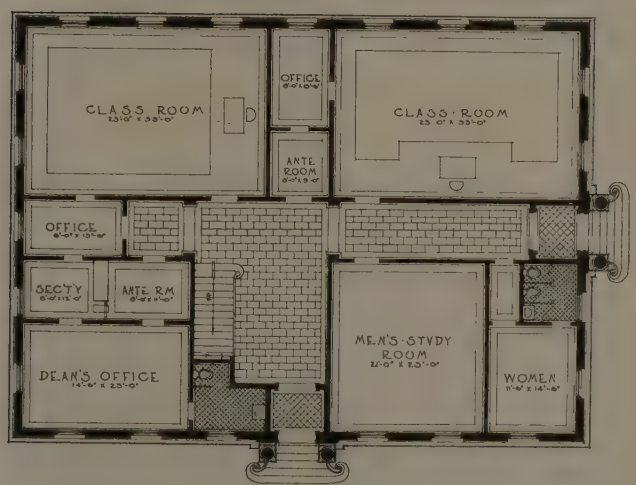
From the pencil-drawing by

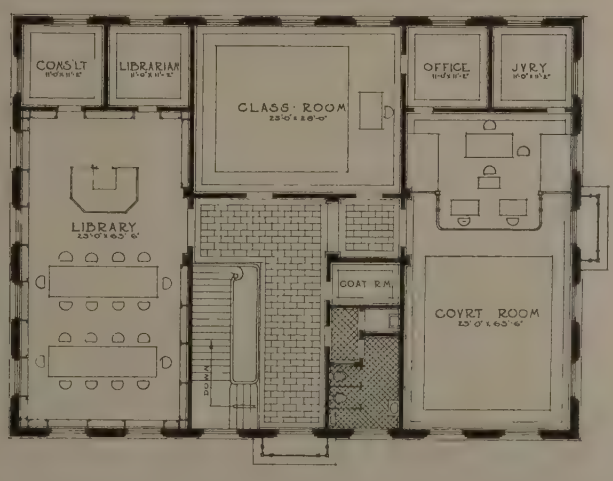
T. T. DE POSTELS

Philadelphia Electric Company Building, Philadelphia, Pa. JOHN T. WINDRIM, ARCHITECT



PHILADELPHIA ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING, PHILADELPHIA, PA. JOHN T. WINDRIM, ARCHITECT





UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA LAW BUILDING, COLUMBIA, S. C. EDWARDS & SAYWARD, ARCHITECTS

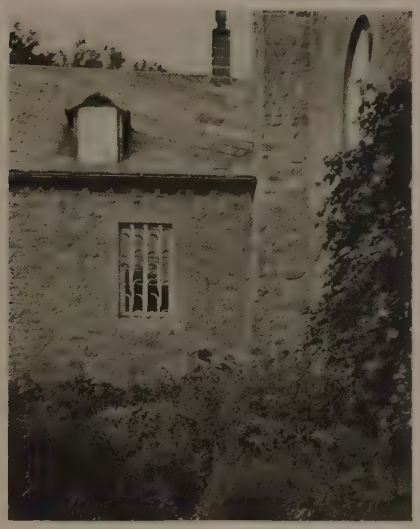
Photographs by Tebbs & Knell

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA LAW BUILDING, COLUMBIA, S. C.

EDWARDS & SAYWARD, ARCHITECTS

Quebec—a house on Les Remparts

Church at Caughnawaga, Quebec



Barred window in the Church at Caughnawaga, Quebec

An Architect's Camera Notes in Canada

MAURICE M. FEUSTMANN

St. Anne de la Perade, Quebec

An old house at Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Stone farmhouse beyond Trois Rivières

A farmhouse near Montreal

A two-family house in Quebec

Champlain Market, Quebec, in 1907, now much changed

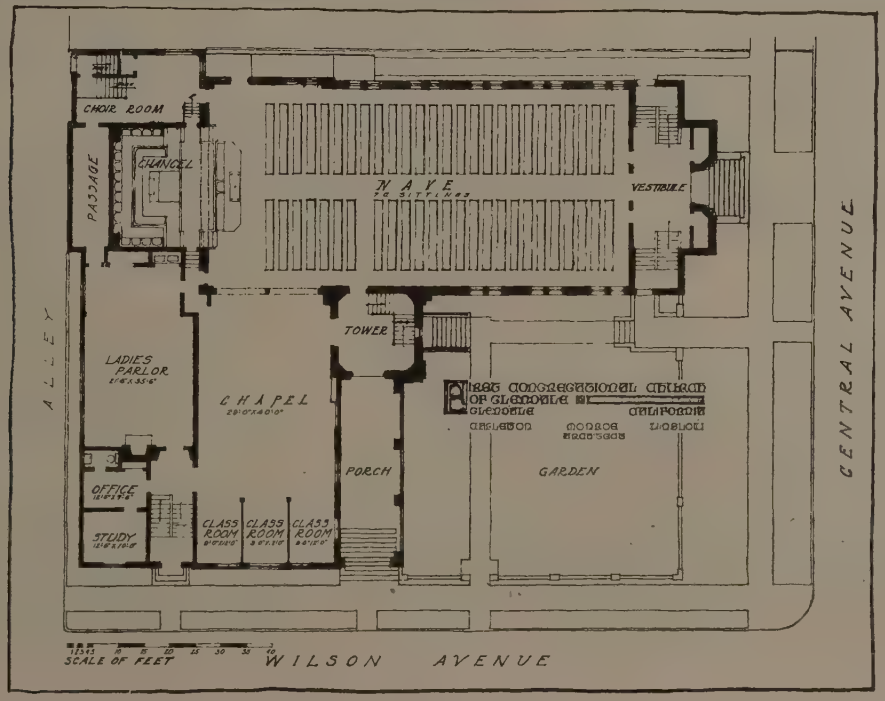
Wayside chapel, Isle d'Orleans, Quebec

Detail of stonework and eaves of a farmhouse near Montreal

A school at Parc Laval, near Montreal

Rectory of the Church at Caughnawaga, Quebec

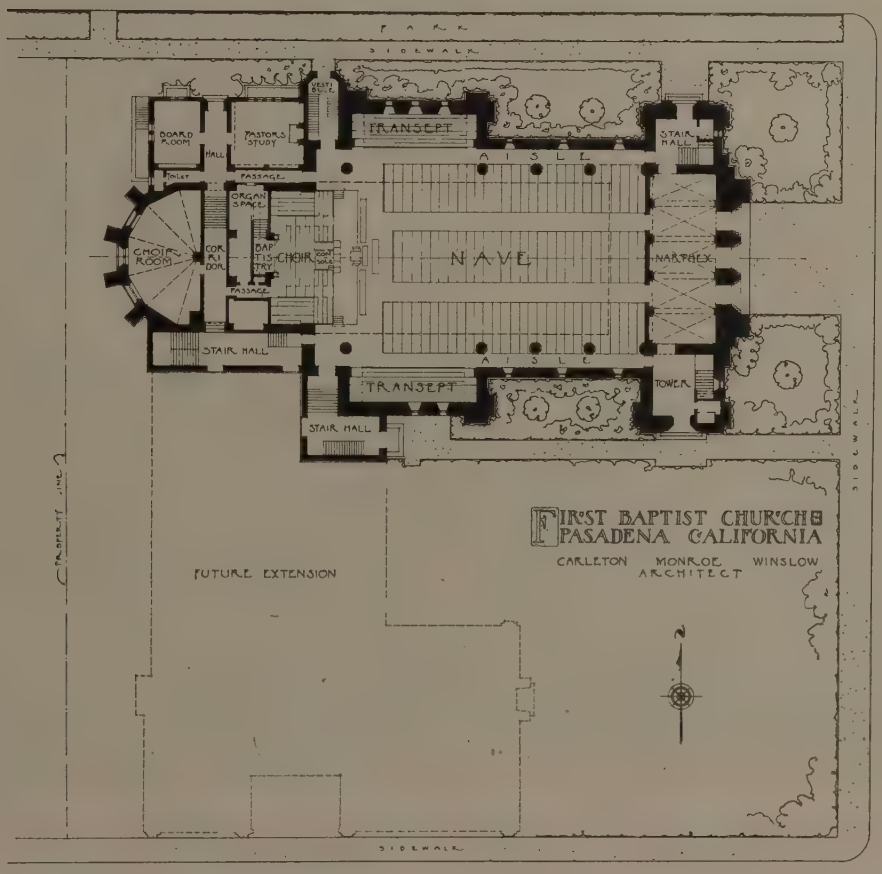
Some Churches of Southern California



First Congregational Church of Glendale, Calif.

Carleton Monroe Winslow, Architect

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PASADENA, CALIF. CARLETON MONROE WINSLOW, ARCHITECT; FREDERICK KENNEDY, JR., ASSOCIATE



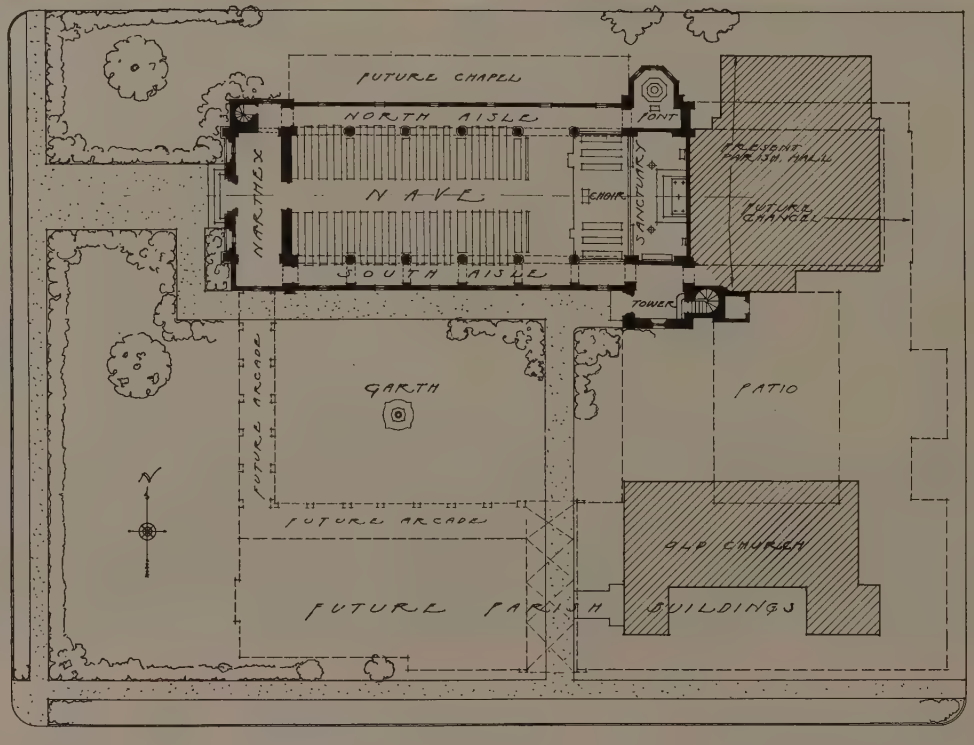
First Baptist Church, Pasadena, Calif.

CARLETON MONROE WINSLOW, ARCHITECT; FREDERICK KENNEDY, JR., ASSOCIATE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PASADENA, CALIF. CARLETON MONROE WINSLOW, ARCHITECT; FREDERICK KENNEDY, JR., ASSOCIATE

First Baptist Church, Pasadena, Calif.

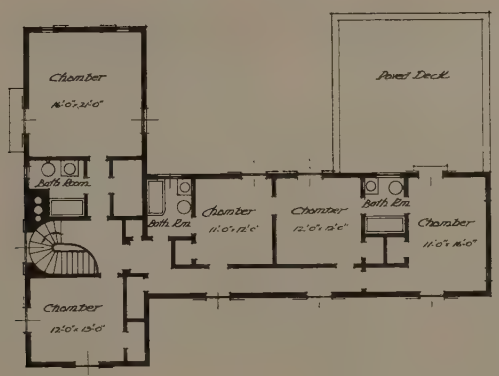
carleton monroe winslow, architect; frederick kennedy, jr., associate

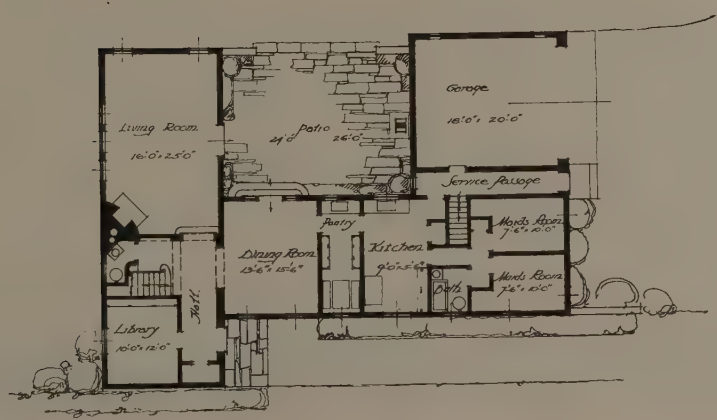


SAINT LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MONROVIA, CALIF.

CARLETON MONROE WINSLOW, ARCHITECT

The patio front





HOUSE OF FRED DOLAN, SCARSDALE, N. Y.

EUGENE J. LANG, ARCHITECT

Photographs by Kenneth Clark

HOUSE OF FRED DOLAN, SCARSDALE, N. Y. The entrance front EUGENE J. LANG, ARCHITECT

House of Fred Dolan, Scarsdale, N. Y. The patio EUGENE J. LANG, ARCHITECT

HOUSE OF FRED DOLAN, SCARSDALE, N. Y. Main entrance EUGENE J. LANG, ARCHITECT

Walnut dresser of inlaid yew tree and ebony, with brass handles. The inlaid bandings of yew appear almost orange color in contrast with walnut — a contrast further accentuated by the narrow strip of ebony inlay

Modern Furniture Design in England

THE WORK OF GORDON RUSSELL

By Harold Donaldson Eberlein

FURNITURE and decoration in general are dependent upon architecture for the setting in which they must appear; architecture, on the other hand, is dependent upon furniture and decoration for the completion of interiors and the fulfillment of their fitness for human occupancy. In view of this inevitable connection, it is plain that the interrelationships between architecture and furniture cannot be disregarded in any satisfying and permanently successful scheme of furniture design. After all, furniture is really movable architecture or, at least, the complement of architecture.

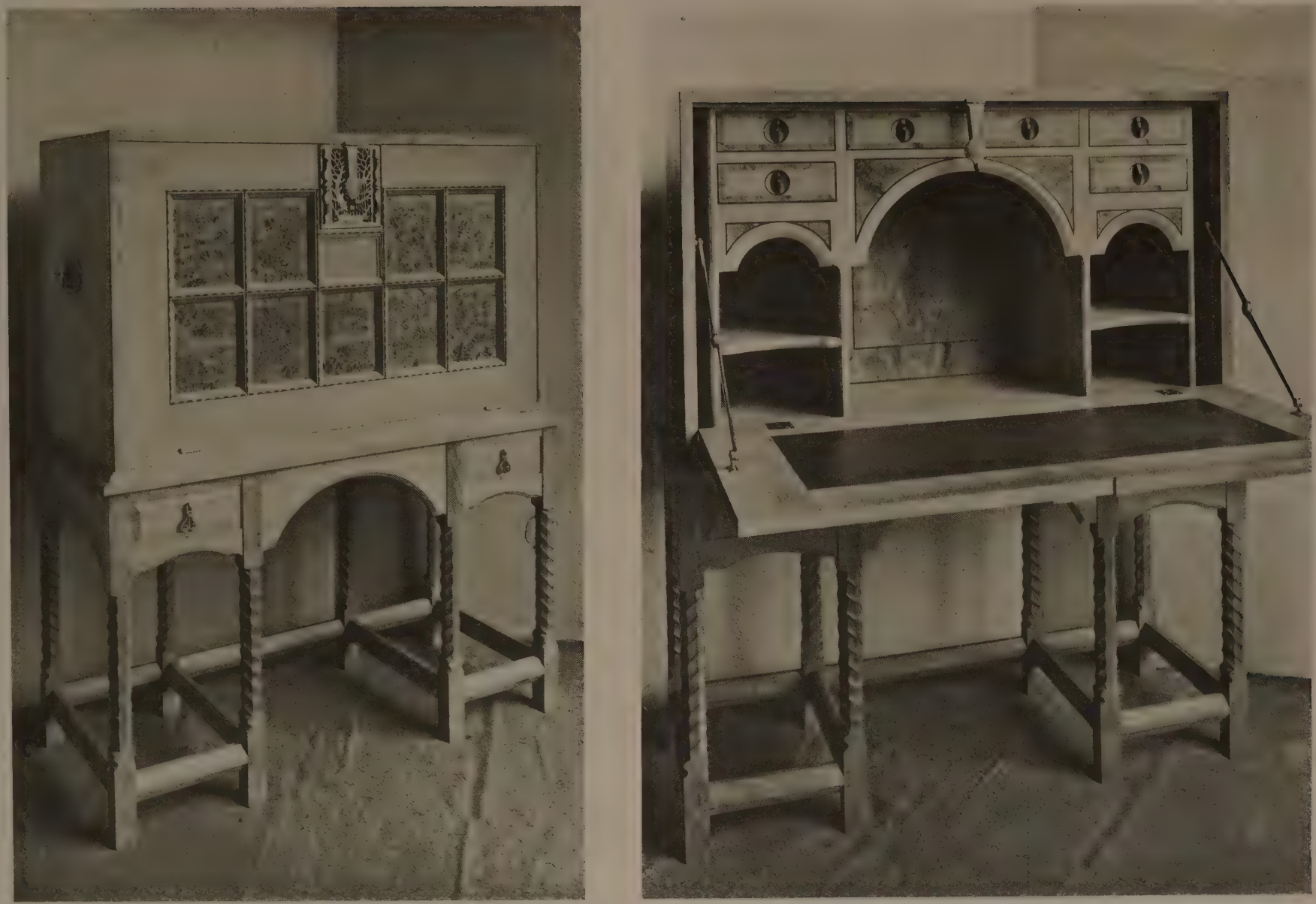
This fact some of the exponents of ultramodernism seem to have forgotten to such an extent that one is inclined to wonder just how far their performances are to be reckoned a back-fire from the Austrian Secession and Art Nouveau, with its exaggerated absurdities and contempt of structural principles. In so far, it must be admitted, they have signally failed of achieving convincing results, as they must needs fail when they minimize structure and purpose, and make the chief aim of their efforts "absolute difference, *at all hazards*, from anything ever done before."

This is not a blanket indictment of modernism in furniture design. It *is* an indictment of those impelled to spurn the dictates of ordinary sanity, sacrificing every other consideration to securing an effect that cannot be connected with anything hitherto known in human experience—in other words, setting an expression of their own individuality, however whimsical, above the supposedly fundamental purpose of their labors. There is just as much opportunity now as ever there has been for the expression of fresh, modern conception in design, and the public is just as ready as ever it has been in all the course of human history to welcome such expression of contemporary effort. But the public has a right to expect that there shall be at least a modicum of enduring value in what it accepts, and that the thing offered shall not be merely a display of feverishly self-conscious egotism without any element of understandable purpose to justify its existence.

The furniture designed by Gordon Russell, and shown in the accompanying illustrations, exhibits an altogether modern and independent conception, without giving evidence of the radical or iconoclastic tendencies that expose some of the current productions to serious question on the score of sincerity, sanity, and fitness to purpose. The designer has exercised sufficient restraint to avoid the pitfall into which more than one of the exponents of modernism have stumbled in yield-

Cabinet in walnut, made for the chairman's room in the Manchester Ship Canal Building. The door has a border of laburnum "oyster wood" with ebony lines

Cabinet on stand in walnut inlay with ebony, box, and laburnum; the interior veneered with oyster wood (transverse sawings across the small log). Pulls are of ebony. Gold Medal, Paris Exhibition, 1925



Oak fall-front writing-cabinet with brass fittings. The inlay is of ebony and yew.

Man's dressing-table of mahogany. The handles are of ebony and the interior fittings and lining are of cedar

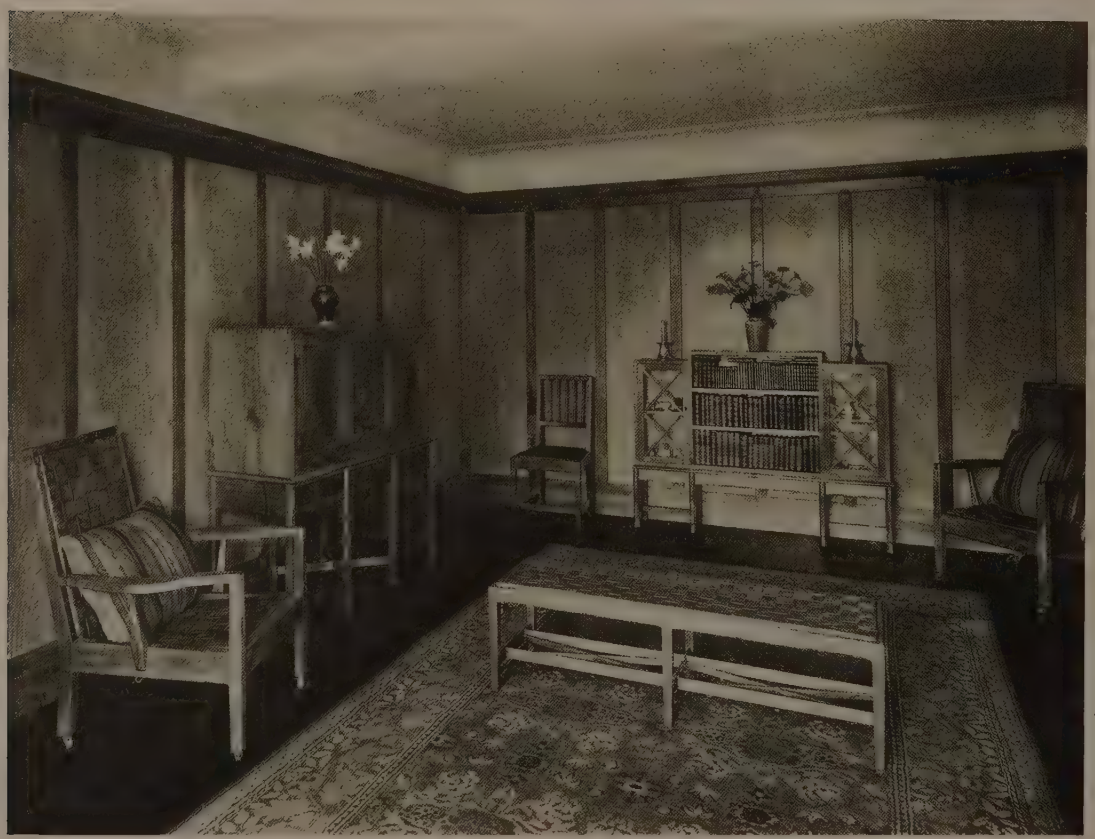
ing to the temptation to cast aside scholarship as well as tradition.

Thoroughly versed in all the lore of precedent and tradition, but wholly independent in his strongly individual interpretation and application of precedent, he recognizes the fact that the past supplies us with a vocabulary of expression, and that this vocabulary we are at liberty to apply in our own way, thereby achieving originality in the safest and sanest if not most spectacular manner.

The measure of *actual* originality attainable by any one person is ordinarily not large, and the originality arrived at in the foregoing manner may be incidental rather than conscious; we are, perforce, limited by a three-dimensional scheme of existence, conditioned by the principles of geometry and trigonometry, so that the only avenue of *new* expression in the realm of form lies in the individual manner of combining the units of the vocabulary. This limitation, so far as form is concerned, we are obliged to accept whether we will or no.

To try to escape the limitation, to spurn utterly the vocabulary yielded by the sum total of human experience and understood by human consciousness—the vocabulary of precedent and tradition—is just as absurd as it would be for any one to reject wholly the vocabulary of every known language and decide to communicate with his fellows by a series of inarticulate babblings of his own contrivance.

If there are limits to the number of possible new forms, and if a line is necessarily either straight or



A room at Dorsington shown as a suitable setting for Gordon Russell's furniture. The panelling was designed by Leslie Mansfield, F.R.I.B.A.

curved, so that the expression of originality in that direction is confined to fresh and individual combinations of old elements, nevertheless, there is still almost limitless scope for the individualist in the field of color and in the use of varied materials.

In the furniture of recent design here illustrated, there are certain characteristics that become more and more striking upon analytic comparison of the various objects. In the first place, with respect to form, we find elimination instead of addition. In other words, we find bevels, chamfers, and sinkages employed to a great extent instead of mouldings and projections. By this means are secured diversity of planes and the consequent relief of light and shadow.

Another conspicuous characteristic is found in the wide variety of materials employed and the contrasting colors of different woods used in juxtaposition. Not only is there the interest of varied color from the different sorts of woods, but the equally varied grains and natural figures are made to contribute their full share to the general effect. All the pieces are finished with wax only, so that the native quality of the divers materials remains unaltered by stains and other agencies. In lieu of metal pulls and knobs, there is frequent recourse to wooden fittings, oftentimes of ebony, conveniently shaped to the hand.

After carefully digesting the qualities of modern furniture design here discussed, one feels that it is still possible to maintain the thesis that worth-while originality is almost invariably the fruit of evolution.

Fall-front writing-cabinet made of walnut, with burr-elm panels and mulberry borders. The narrow bandings on stiles and rails separating drawers are of alternating ebony and box

A bedroom furnished for the most part with modern furniture of Gordon Russell's design. The woodwork is of light oak.

A fall-front writing-cabinet in walnut with burr-elm panels and mulberry borders. The lock-plate and handles are of silver. The square accents at the corners of the panels are chamfered squares of ebony

Chest on stand, made of English oak. The handles are of forged brass. Chamfers and bevels here fulfil all the decorative functions usually performed by applied mouldings

Chest of drawers in oak, lined with cedar. The handles are of brown oak. Note the effect of the interrupted chamfering on edges of stiles and rails and the play of light and shadow secured thereby

A sideboard of oak with handles of laburnum. These handles, comfortable to grasp and with no danger of becoming detached, serve both a practical and a decorative purpose

Above, a large walnut table, octagonal in shape, inlaid with laburnum "oysters" and ebony. The top is veneered with burled walnut. Here again sinkages or channellings and chamfers supplant projecting mouldings. Made for the chairman's room, Manchester Ship Canal Building

A print-cabinet with fourteen drawers enclosed by doors. The latter are veneered with finely figured walnut and laburnum oyster-wood on an ebony base. Here the grain of the woods, as well as their colors, is made to contribute to the decorative value. The mounts are of silver. Now in the collection of Lord Dunsany

ARCHITECTURE'S PORTFOLIO

OF

GARDEN GATES

Subjects of Previous Portfolios

STAIRWAY DETAILS (GEORGIAN, EARLY AMERICAN, ETC.)
February, 1927

PANELLING OF THE ENGLISH TYPES
January, 1927

STONE MASONRY TEXTURES
March, 1927

FANLIGHTS AND OTHER OVERDOOR TREATMENTS
May, 1927

DOOR HARDWARE
August, 1927

TEXTURES OF BRICKWORK
June, 1927

IRON RAILINGS
July, 1927

ENGLISH CHIMNEYS
April, 1927

GABLE ENDS
October, 1927

PALLADIAN MOTIVES
September, 1927

CIRCULAR AND OVAL WINDOWS (CLASSIC AND RENAISSANCE)
December, 1927

COLONIAL TOP-RAILINGS OF WOOD
November, 1927

BUILT-IN BOOKCASES
January, 1928

CUPOLAS
May, 1928

DOOR HOODS
March, 1928

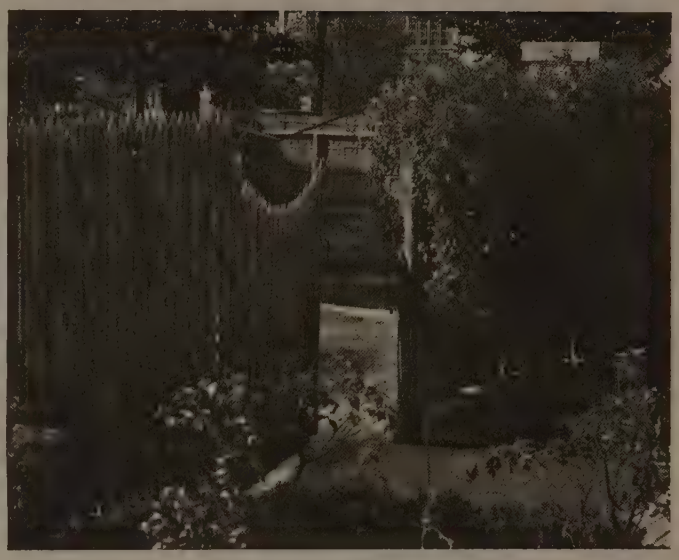
BAY WINDOWS
April, 1928

CHIMNEY TOPS
February, 1928

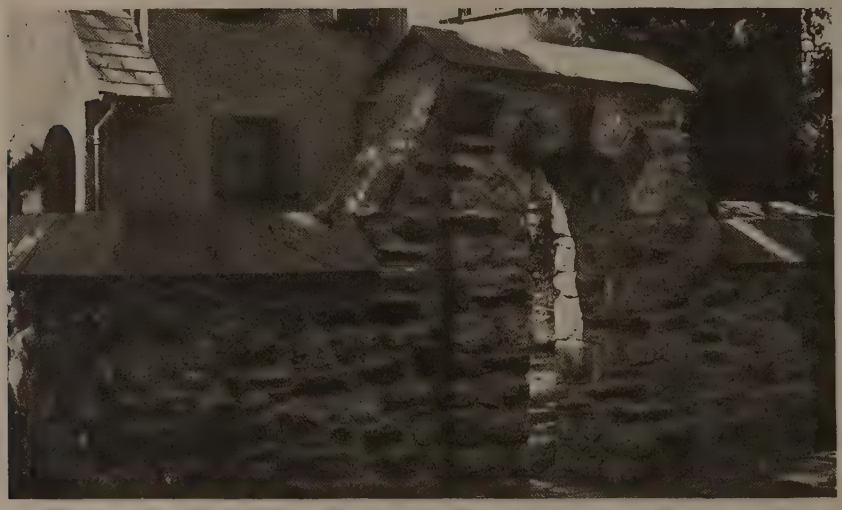
SUBJECTS IN PREPARATION FOR FUTURE ISSUES

Beamed Ceilings	Leaded Glass Medallions	English Fireplaces	Garden Walls
Oriel Windows	Cornices of Wood	Floors of Wood	Rain-Conductor Heads
Fences	Decorative Plaster Ceilings	Elevator Doors	Stucco Textures
Stair Ends	Garden Steps	Entrance Portico Seats	Treillage

JOHN RUSSELL POPE



GUILBERT & BETELLE



LEWIS BOWMAN

LEWIS BOWMAN

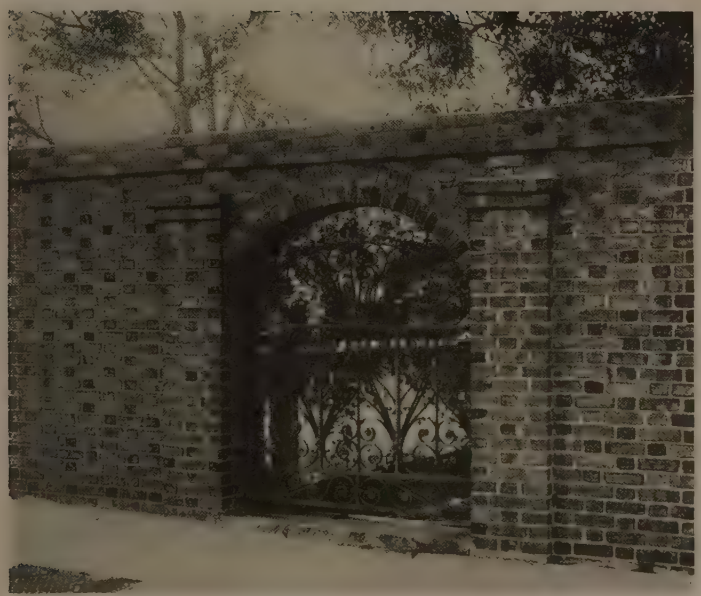
LAURENCE HALL FOWLER

JOHN RUSSELL POPE

SAN DOMENICO, TUSCANY

GODALMING, SURREY

GIBBES STREET



JOHN RUSSELL POPE

DAVIS, DUNLAP & BARNEY

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JAMES WM. O'CONNOR

WALTER T. KARCHER AND LIVINGSTON SMITH

SAN DOMENICO, ITALY

LAKE COMO, ITALY

TAYLOR & LEVI

WARREN, KNIGHT & DAVIS

RUTH DEAN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

HENRY G. MORSE

FRANK J. FORSTER

BEDFORDSHIRE, HENRY HOLLAND, 1775

LAKE COMO, ITALY

EARL KITCHENER'S FORMER HOME, BERMUDA

DAVIS, DUNLAP & BARNEY

RUTH DEAN, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

MARIAN COFFIN, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

JAS. WM. O'CONNOR. RUTH DEAN, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

VILLA PAZZI,
NEAR FLORENCE
Courtesy of J. B. Lippincott Co.

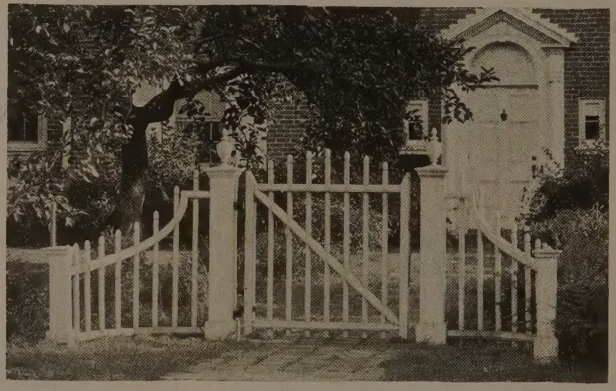
MAYNICKE & FRANKE

J. WILLIAMS BEAL

DELANO & ALDRICH

E. GUY DAWBER

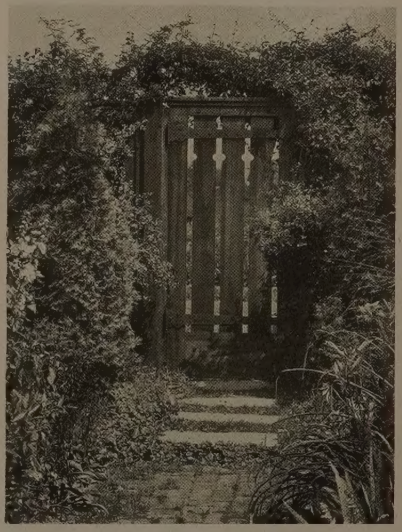
D. D. MERRILL



CLEMENT R. NEWKIRK

JOHN BYERS

GARDEN AT BROOKLINE, MASS.



WM. PITKIN, JR., LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

The Architectural Clinic

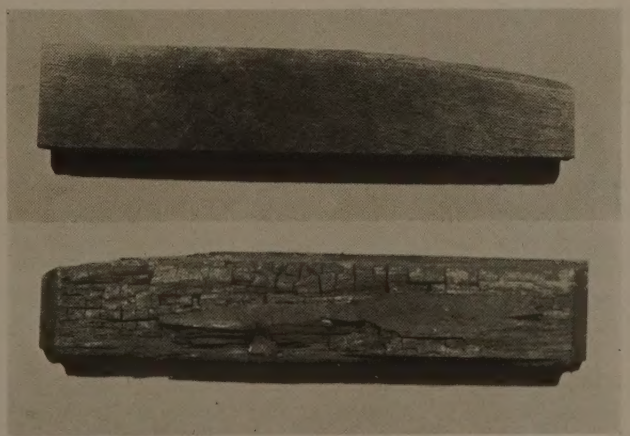
ON WOOD FLOORS—AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

IN this day of varied wood-floor problems, when the material may be old or new, solid plank or veneered parquet, to be nailed or screwed to all types of foundations from concrete slabs to the old standby joists, it is obviously impossible to cover good and poor practice in less than a volume. Yet there are a number of conditions which make for permanency and level floors as opposed to dry-rot and roller-coaster undulations, which are more or less constants, and which unfortunately enough are too often overlooked in the demand for speedy construction.

The first adage which may justly be applied to floors is that the owner gets only what he pays for; and the second is like unto it, that to be penny-wise in using inferior materials is worse than pound-foolish. Speculative building has invited third-rate materials and fourth-class workmanship—nowhere is it more evident than in floors with peeling veneers, warping surfaces, and occasional boards which not only spring but actually turn up their toes. While the reasons underlying unsightly floors are several and varied (and in spite of precautions not always to be avoided), in general it is because the owner was overanxious to save every penny possible on the initial expense of material and workmanship, regardless of consequences about six months later when repairs or new floors might be necessary. It is a case of so-called "good business" (pathetic irony in that phrase!) when the owner sells and gets out from under, but a jarring boomerang if he does not. If green lumber be used in a building which has no heat to dry it out, and if the lowest estimate be accepted without investigating other floors laid by the same contractor, it is little wonder if the finished floor warps, splits, dry-rots, and is such a disgrace that within six months it must be replaced. In such event the owner gains in experience what he loses in money for new flooring—but that is poor consolation.

The importance of the floor foundation cannot be overemphasized because it is so little realized. For example, it might not occur to many architects, when superintending, that if the plasterer locates his mixing-box in the middle of a room, this alone may cause serious floor buckling several months later when the heat begins to dry out the joists and underflooring which were water-soaked. Nor is it likely to occur to the layman that if he begins his house in the autumn instead of the spring of the year he is apt to get both a cheaper and a better building: if the house be started in the spring there will be no heat to dry out any part of it until after it is completed, unless he pays for fuel, and if the architect recommends that a ton or two of coal be burned in salamanders during the summer weather, it sounds like silly extravagance; yet, after all the floors are laid and the client moves in, he is embittered, about Thanksgiving time, to find that he has nothing but warped and cracked floors. If the house is begun in the autumn, on the other hand, it will be enclosed by the time winter sets in, and salamanders which are kept burning for the workmen's comfort will incidentally dry out joists, underflooring, and everything else, so that all shrinkage takes place before the finished floors are laid, well toward springtime. The following winter, when heat is turned on, the shrinkage and drying out have already taken place, and disappointing floors are not likely to be the cause of the architect's telephone burning with complaints. The relative economy of obtaining an estimate from some contractor who wishes to retain his best workmen throughout the winter months, and welcomes the opportunity of building a residence which will serve this purpose, needs no emphasis.

Floor specialists complain that when they arrive on the scene the cards are stacked against the chances for their doing a perfect job. Joists and underflooring are frequently laid at the incorrect height, with the result that the preparation for the finished floor must laboriously be raised and trued; seldom is it possible to lay the finish-floor directly over the blind-floor, because the latter is not level throughout. The best underflooring is well-seasoned clear oak with square edges, not over 4 or 5 inches in width, and of not less than 1-inch lumber in thickness (planed on one side, so that in reality it is 15/16). The blind-floor should be laid at 45 degrees to the general direction of the finish-floor, *i. e.*, on the diagonal if the floor-boards are to have only one direction, or parallel to one side of the room if the finish is to be a parquet in which the general direction is to be diagonal. If anything goes wrong with the finished floor, the contractor who laid it generally receives all the blame, whereas the chances are that half the time it is because the joists and underflooring have shrunk, causing the finish-floor to warp, buckle, and perform dolefully.



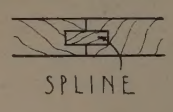
Dry-rot of oak flooring, attributed to the cinders in the concrete

In the modern building with concrete slab to be overlaid by wood floor, the usual construction is to specify sleepers of 2 by 3-inch stock (preferably laid on 14-inch centres), and the space between to be filled by cinder-concrete within a half-inch of the top of the sleepers. Under certain circumstances this may be satisfactory, without any ill effects on the finish-floor. Then, again, dry-rot may set in and not only do the damage as indicated by the piece of oak flooring shown in the accompanying photograph, with one-third of its thickness eaten away in six months from the time it was laid, but the sleepers and blind-floor may be completely powdered in spots so as to leave the finish-floor to rove as best it can. Floor men attribute this dry-rot action to the type of cinders used, which, when mixed with water (and very little cement), give off sulphuric fumes. The proper precaution seems to be to creosote the sleepers, and where necessary to conform with the building and fire regulations, fire-proof them as well, as the first step. Next is to fill in between the sleepers with actual concrete rather than soggy cinders, although cinder-concrete may prove satisfactory if the cinders are but taking the place of stone in the aggregate, and are left to dry thoroughly before any flooring is laid over them. It is equally true that sleepers cannot be expected to behave healthily unless the concrete slab has dried out thoroughly before they are laid. The temptation of the contractor to make a record or, what is more usual, make more money, by laying sleepers and blind-flooring as soon as the slab has set, is easy to understand, because the chances he takes are practically negligible. The subcontractor who laid the finish-flooring will be the one to assimilate all the blame and wrath, for who will believe him when he maintains that his flooring cracked, warped, and billowed because the sleepers and blind-flooring were laid on a green slab, and how is he going to prove it? The sum and substance of good floor preparation over a concrete slab is, in general, to lay no wood until the concrete has dried out white, to have sleepers no farther than 14 inches apart, to have regular stone-concrete rather than cinder-fill between sleepers to hold them in place (if the client will not hear of the expense of the latter, to insist that there be a rich mixture of cement with the cinders), and that the latter also be perfectly dried before the blind-floor is laid.

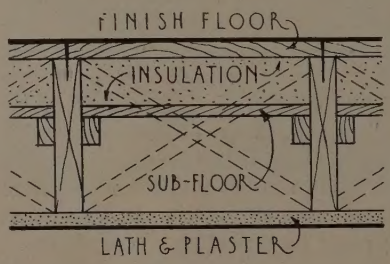
For a fire-proofed wood floor over a concrete slab, the sleepers should be creosoted and they, as well as all flooring, including the bottom veneer and core of the finish-floor, should be fire-proofed. Only the top veneer of the finish remains untreated.

While veneered flooring is satisfactory as long as it remains dry, it cannot be expected to withstand either extreme dampness or actual liquid water. The glue which binds veneer to the core is not water-proof, in spite of contrary claims, and on its dissolving the natural result is for the thin flake of wood to peel off. The care and use which the floor will receive should enter into the architect's consideration as a vital factor, for the added advantage of an intricate design, or the saving of a few dollars in using veneered material, does not offset the disadvantage of a haphazard design of a peeled surface and the cost of new flooring. It goes back to the truth that the owner gets no more than what he pays for, and if in having veneered flooring he thinks he is saving money, it is because he is willing to take the chance on having to replace the flooring.

Finished flooring is most certain of longevity when laid over the foundation as described above, with good paper between it and the blind-flooring, and when it is of the slip-tongue type with splines, as indicated in the diagram. There are two general methods in vogue for securing it to the blind-flooring, one being to bore holes into the finished flooring to a depth of a fraction of an inch, sink screws into these, and cover up the heads by plugs which exactly fit into the bored hole (often about ⅜ inch in diameter) and planed flush with the surface. The other method is to drive wrought-iron nails into the finish-floor, either leaving their irregular and therefore ornamental heads slightly projecting, or providing enough of a sinkage so that their tops are about flush with the finished floor. It is needless to point out that both screws and nails perform their tasks best when they penetrate the blind-flooring and enter the joists or sleepers.



One floor specialist recommends a method which was used, he says, for the grand old houses of Newport, and which has the advantage of making a more nearly sound-proof floor than anything he has yet discovered. The accompanying sketch indicates the method: nailing cleats on the joists (this may be done before they are put up in place and thus save labor); nailing to these cleats all the odds and ends of boards so as to form a subflooring about 3 inches below the top of the joists; filling in this space with plaster débris, insulating wool or similar material; then nailing or screwing the finish-floor directly to the joists. If all the material is kiln-dried and the job is done in a workmanlike manner, we are assured that not only is the floor certain to stay where put, but sound is likewise kept in its place. It would seem that, while the method requires some additional work in laying the subfloor between joists and necessitating cutting out around electrical conduits and cross-bracing, the saving in the blind-floor expense and the assurance of additional sound-proofing is worth the difference.



A method of sound-proofing floors that was commonly used in the great houses about Newport